

Message Text

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ACTION OES-07

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 EUR-12 ISO-00 ACDA-12 CIAE-00
INR-10 IO-13 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 EB-08 NRC-05
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FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5350
INFO AMEMBASSY BRASILIA
AMEMBASSY VIENNA

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 2863

USIAEA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, TECH, MNUC, AR
SUBJECT: FURTHER COMMENTS ON NUCLEAR RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

REF: STATE 88681

1. SCIENCE COUNSELOR MET YESTERDAY, APRIL 13, WITH DR. HUGO
ERRAMUSPE - DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT FOR CNEA. ERRAMUSPE
INDICATED THAT THE LIST OF QUESTIONS SUBMITTED TO CNEA
BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF ENERGY CONCERNING PROVISION OF
US HIGH ENRICHED URANIUM (HEU) FOR THE RA-3 REACTOR WILL
BE COMPLETED BY NEXT WEEK AND WILL BE SUBMITTED TO THE
US EMBASSY FOR TRANSFER TO DOE. HE INDICATED THIS HAS
BEEN A DIFFICULT TASK BUT HE IS TREATING IT WITH THE
UTMOST CARE AND URGENCY. HE HOPES THE CNEA ANSWERS WILL
SATISFY THE DOE CRITERIA SINCE THIS IS BECOMING AN URGENT
PROBLEM FOR THE OPERATION OF THE RA-3 REACTOR. ERRAMUSPE
CALCULATES IT WILL TAKE THREE YEARS TO CONVERT THE RA-3
TO LOW ENRICHED URANIUM (LEU) AND A CONSIDERABLE AMOUNT
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OF MONEY.

2. IN THIS REGARD, THE REPORTING OFFICER BROUGHT TO
DR. ERRAMUSPE'S ATTENTION THE INFORMATION IN REFTEL
NOTING THAT THE DOE ANNOUNCED A FIVE-YEAR PROGRAM FOR THE
DEVELOPMENT OF LEU FUELS FOR RESEARCH REACTORS. THIS
WORK IS BEING DIRECTED BY THE ARGONNE LAB AND OTHER

COUNTRIES ARE INVITED TO COOPERATE IN THE PROGRAM. THIS EVENTUALLY SHOULD SOLVE SOME OF ARGENTINA'S PROBLEMS, ESPECIALLY IN THEIR PROGRAM OF COOPERATION WITH OTHER DEVELOPING COUNTRIES SUCH AS ECUADOR, BOLIVIA, AND PERU IN PROVIDING NUCLEAR RESEARCH REACTORS. ERRAMUSPE AGREED ENTIRELY WITH THE US PROGRAM OF NON-PROLIFERATION AND ARGENTINA'S FULL PARTICIPATION IN THE INTERNATIONAL FUEL CYCLE PROGRAM. HOWEVER, HE SAID THE PROVISION OF HEU FOR THE RA-3 IS A PROBLEM THAT REQUIRES AN IMMEDIATE SOLUTION.

3. IN REGARD TO FULL SCOPE SAFEGUARDS, ERRAMUSPE REMARKED THAT THIS WILL MOST LIKELY FOLLOW THE SIGNING OF TLATELOLCO BUT WILL TAKE SOME TIME TO WORK OUT THE POLITICAL ASPECTS. HE SAID EMPHATICALLY THAT ARGENTINA WOULD MOVE AHEAD WITH ITS PILOT REPROCESSING PLANT IN ORDER TO OBTAIN THE TECHNOLOGY FOR FUTURE USE - NOT AS A WEAPONS PROGRAM BUT FOR PEACEFUL USES IN THE CONVERSION OF URANIUM. ALSO, THE REPROCESSED PLUTONIUM BURNS LONGER AS A FUEL ELEMENT IN THE REACTORS. HE HOPED THE US WOULD NOT PUSH ARGENTINA "IN A CORNER" ON REPROCESSING. AFTER ALL, REMARKED ERRAMUSPE, "IF WE ACCEPT FULL SCOPE SAFEGUARDS, IAEA INSPECTORS CAN WATCH AND MONITOR EVERYTHING, EVEN AN EXPLOSION FOR PEACEFUL PURPOSES." HE CONTINUED THAT IF ARGENTINA WAS PUSHED TO THE WALL, BEING A STUBBORN AND INDEPENDENT PEOPLE, THEY WOULD CHOOSE TO MOVE AHEAD ON CONFIDENTIAL

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THEIR OWN, WHICH WOULD TAKE MUCH LONGER BUT COULD BE ACCOMPLISHED. THIS WAY THE US OR IAEA WOULD NOT HAVE ANY CONTROL OVER THE SITUATION.

4. ERRAMUSPE REFERRED TO THE BRAZIL DEAL WITH GERMANY AND MENTIONED THIS IS A MAJOR PROBLEM FOR CNEA, AND THAT ALL POLITICAL AND MANY TECHNICAL DECISIONS ARE BASED ON THE BRAZIL PROGRAM AND THE POSSIBILITY OF THEIR MOVING AHEAD OF ARGENTINA AND PARTICULARLY DEVELOPING A WEAPONS CAPABILITY.

5. FINALLY, ERRAMUSPE SAID THAT ARGENTINA WILL BEND SOMEWHAT TO KEEP GOOD US RELATIONS, BUT THERE ARE POINTS THEY CANNOT GO BEYOND BECAUSE OF REGIONAL BALANCES AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS.

6. COMMENTS: ERRAMUSPE SEEMED QUITE FORTHRIGHT IN THIS DISCUSSION AND VERY CONCERNED THAT THE US IS PUSHING ARGENTINA TOO HARD, TOO FAST. HE FEELS THERE IS A DEFINITE TENDENCY WITHIN THE GOA TO MAINTAIN GOOD US RELATIONS AND NUCLEAR COOPERATION. EMBASSY REPORTING BOTH ON THE INTELLIGENCE SIDE AND SCIENTIFIC AND POLITICAL SIDE SEEM TO AGREE THAT THE CNEA IS MOVING AHEAD AS RAPIDLY AS

POSSIBLE WITH THEIR REPROCESSING PROGRAM. THERE ALSO
SEEMS TO BE AN INDICATION, AS REPORTED PREVIOUSLY, THAT
AFTER THE RATIFICATION OF TLAELOLCO, ARGENTINA IS CONTEM-
PLATING THE NEXT STEP OF FULL SCOPE SAFEGUARDS WITH THE
IAEA AS ESSENTIAL FOR THEIR FUTURE NUCLEAR POWER PROGRAM.
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